

West Asia Regional Consultative Meeting in preparation for the Ninth Global Ministerial Environment Forum and the Tenth Special Session of Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum

Manama, Bahrain, 11- 14 November 2007

Introduction

West Asia Civil Societies would like to express their appreciation to UNEP and UNEP ROWA for the invitation to participate in The Regional Consultation Meeting for West Asia in preparation for the 9th Global Civil Society Forum and 10th Special Session of the Governing council held in Manama from 11 to 14 November 2007. About 20 participants contributed in the meeting representing different NGOs in different areas with gender and sub-regional balance.

The theme of the consultation was "Globalization and the Environment: Mobilizing Finance to meet the Climate Challenge". The meeting also discussed the UNEP Medium Term Strategy; the Guidelines for Enhancing Major Group's Participation at UNEP's Governance Level, and the Global Environment Outlook (GEO 4) report.

GEO 4

Civil Societies of West Asia appreciate the presentation of GEO 4 and thank UNEP for giving them the opportunity to discuss it. CSOs requested UNEP to elaborate on the role expected of them and whether their participation is anticipated only in marketing and making use of the existing report or if they will play an active role in the preparation of the new report. It was agreed that CSOs are different in their line of work, capabilities and possible roles.

Raising Awareness:

- Civil Societies of West Asia request UNEP to organize more workshops for CSOs to understand the GEO report and how to participate actively in the process of generating the report
- Civil Societies of West Asia request UNEP to work towards a wider public awareness at the global, regional, and local levels.
- Civil Societies of West Asia believe that more emphasis should be put on equity in collaboration with government and private sector.
- Civil Societies of West Asia encourage themselves and other NGOs to work as pressure groups on governments. Support is needed for the few CSOs in the region that play the role of pressure groups. This should encourage other CSOs to collaborate in this line.

Capacity building:

- Civil Societies of West Asia suggest improving networking between major groups and building a coalition of CSOs for collective action under one umbrella
- Civil Societies of West Asia strongly believe that capacity building is complementary to raising awareness, therefore urge UNEP to help the relevant CSOs combine theory with hands on experience and how they can use this information on the ground.
- CSOs urged UNEP to support their efforts to save the environment in their regions through provision of technical support, references and expertise to make their effort more efficient and productive.

The civil societies ensure the need for developing the Arab Environment Outlook "AEO" in order to have an integrated environmental assessment

Potential role:

- Civil Societies of West Asia support an integrated approach where priority is to establish partnerships between CSOs and UNEP to support the outreach of GEO
- Civil Societies of West Asia need to be supported to raise funds for implementation of projects that also promote the dissemination of the GEO findings and concentrate on effectiveness of programmes
- Civil Societies of West Asia agree that GEO key findings need to be communicated to specific target groups. They should be customized and messages to address different target audiences can be in form of booklets, cartoons, etc.). Some CSOs can help in this process in collaboration with UNEP to make them available for all the other CSOs in the Arab region.
- Civil Societies of West Asia suggest to UNEP that regional perspective of poverty, accessibility to clean water, areas under occupation particular in West Asia should be taken into account.
- Civil Societies of West Asia finds GEO 4 a credible UN report which can be used for more active and efficient participation by their governments, and decision makers such as the Parliament
- Civil Societies of West Asia can facilitate the process by being a focal point to support outreach activities – need to be recognized as real partner by UNEP / stakeholder to be part of the decision-making process in the GEO process (e.g. priority issues setting)

Civil Societies of West Asia urge CSOs, UNEP and governments to work together towards Strengthening Data and Information for Environmental Assessment.**Mobilizing Finance to meet the Climate Challenge**

Civil Societies of West Asia acknowledge the challenges for meeting the mitigation and adaptation costs will require addressing the question: how to create enabling environment to address issues such as, use of greener technologies, find alternative sources of energy, energy efficiency / green building, agriculture / alternative production, disaster management and water issues.

We identify cross-cutting issues such as, increase knowledge base, research and development, networking, setting up of regulatory frameworks and technology transfer and capacity building along the principles of the Bali Strategic Plan.

West Asia Civil Societies support achieving multiple environmental objectives and avoid unintended environmental consequences through adaptation measures for the transition to a low carbon economy by strengthening the institutional framework, ensure proper monitoring of implementation, and accountability

Civil Societies of West Asia support wealth generation and poverty eradication through implementing adaptation measures like mobilizing private sector for sustainable low carbon economy and encouraging ecotourism and sustainable tourism; CSR; and Green building

UNEP Medium Term Strategy

Civil Societies of West Asia have the following views on UNEP Medium Term Strategy (MTS) 2010 - 2013 (Environment for Development):

Climate change

Civil Societies of West Asia suggest to UNEP to deal with the issue of climate change through the following means:

- Addressing the root causes instead of mitigating and adapting
- Transfer of clean technology as one means of reducing the impacts of climate change: issue of equilibrium between developed and developing countries

- Public awareness raising and capacity building: important in priority setting for addressing the basic needs of the communities
- Incite the private sector to invest in the Green technologies, renewable energy and carbon trading, etc.
- Setting up of the legislation: consolidate / initiate / enhance the legislation to address climate change – taxes and incentives in place

Ecosystem management

Civil Societies of West Asia acknowledge that the issue of ecosystem management needs our special attention and believe that prevention is better than cure, therefore linkages between population increase and ecosystem services should be noticed, and equitable benefits distribution considered. CSOs expressed great concern towards the loss of marine ecosystems due to dredging and reclamation processes. We also encourage sustainable use of resources and implementation of land use and coastal zones management legislation.

Environmental Governance

Civil Societies of West Asia support restructuring UNEP to become an Organization not a programme in order for it to be the regulatory body for the environment. CSOs also expressed their hope that UNEP will develop and strengthen its support to the CSOs.

Civil Societies of West Asia call upon the GC to assess and evaluate the role of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) in the context of the UN Reform i.e. restructuring the CPR, and in providing technical and scientific leadership

Civil Societies of West Asia urge the governments to consider CSOs as equal partners to achieve sustainable development and to consider environmental issues as human rights issues.

Hazardous substances

- Civil Societies of West Asia call upon governments to enforce international treaties that prohibit dumping hazardous wastes and to stop developed countries using either the deficiencies of developing countries legislations or by violating international treaties; we urge GC to take punitive measures and severe penalties
- Civil Societies of West Asia call upon UNEP to build capacities of CSOs to handle the enforcement and monitoring, including proper disposal of E-waste in West Asia
- CSOs of WA call upon UNEP to study the current situation of hazardous substances in critical areas of the Region such as Iraq

Environmental dimension of disasters and conflicts

- Civil Societies of West Asia call upon all nations to arrive to peaceful conflict resolutions and avoid armed conflicts and weapons trafficking
- The Region voices its concern in respect of the use of depleted uranium, cluster bombs that affect the vulnerable, the needy, etc. This is a major concern in the Region and GC should take note of the situation.
- Disaster warning system is needed in the region, and information also made available to CSOs to play their awareness role
- Civil Societies of West Asia call for strong measure to define responsibility and accountability of environmental destruction related to wars and armed conflicts
- Civil Societies of West Asia acknowledge that in the issue of conflict, environment always loses out against security: environment insecurity is equally important
- Civil Societies of West Asia call upon the international community to undertake post-conflict assessment;

- Civil Societies of West Asia recognize UNEP's initiative in producing desk study for Palestine, Iraq and Lebanon.
- CSOs also call upon UNEP to initiate a mechanism to attach a unified price tag to each type of environmental damage (e.g. loss of a 1M³ of coral reef or chemical pollution of 1M³ of drinking water or loss of 1 hectare of trees) regardless of nationality of the owner.
- Civil Societies of West Asia call upon UNEP to initiate a mechanism for defining fines to be paid by the aggressor, and training CSOs in the region in environmental valuation.
- Civil Societies of West Asia call upon UNEP to initiate a process to define and deal with Environmental crimes (e.g. in Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon)
- Civil Societies of West Asia stress the fact that war is a global issue imposed on the West Asia Region and it also has global consequences which must be met by the whole world.

Resource efficiency – sustainable consumption and production

Resource efficiency is a first priority in West Asia, therefore we have the following views on this subject:

- Civil Societies of West Asia encourage the private sector to invest in use of greener alternatives for energy sources and establishment of energy efficiency mechanisms.
- Civil Societies of West Asia urge governments, CSOs in the region and the public to promote Intra-regional trade which represents less than 10% of trade: activate pan-Arab treaties
- Civil Societies of West Asia call upon UNEP to promote cleaner production centre as well as programmes that were adapted in most regions except in West Asia
- Civil Societies of West Asia urge governments of the region to allocate sufficient resources to further encourage regional R&D centres and to encourage transfer of knowledge and technology from developed countries to developing countries and to encourage success stories and best practices to be replicated in the region.
- Civil Societies of West Asia call for Governments of the region to impose incentives and disincentives for efficient use of energy and water
- CSOs of West Asia urged the Governments to support the private sector initiatives for sustainable consumption and production.
- CSOs of West Asia urge governments and the private sector in the region to make substantive investment in research and studies in this field.
- CSOs of West Asia urge governments and the private sector in the region to make substantive investment in public awareness and preparing consumers to play their role in sustainable consumption and promote sustainable production

General comments

- Civil Societies of West Asia call upon UNEP and GC to consider local, social and cultural value systems of the region.
- Civil Societies of West Asia stress that raising public awareness is essential in all the above issues.
- Civil Societies of West Asia stress that capacity building on all levels, CSOs, governments, and public

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